

REMARKS

Applicant again thanks the Examiner for indicating the presence of allowable subject matter. For the reasons that follow, Applicant believes that this supplemental amendment presents claims that are novel and, accordingly, place the present application in condition for allowance.

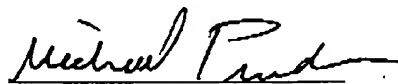
In the office action dated December 21, 2005, claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,438,416 to Thurston in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,626,449 to McKinlay. Claim 22 recites, "said flange segments being slightly flexible axially of said washer." According to the Examiner, "Thurston discloses ... [t]he flange including plural segments which are read as those areas between the slots (36) which separate them." However, Applicant submits that the disclosure of Thurston neither teaches nor suggests, "said flange segments being slightly flexible axially of said washer." Accordingly, for at least this reason, Applicant submits that claim 22 is allowable.

Furthermore, Thurston teaches away from providing flange segments that are flexible axially of the washer. To the contrary, the "flange segments" that the Examiner sees in Thurston do not flex, but rather provide "biting contact with a base material to which the assembly is fastened to thereby resist loosening of the assembly." Thurston, Col. 2, ll. 35-37. Thurston teaches that "a bent finger projection designated 70 is formed at the leading edge of the cutaway area 36." Thurston, Col. 2, ll. 68-70. Thurston also teaches that, "[t]he effect of the bent finger projection is to provide the bolt assembly with a biting action against the base material to which the bolt assembly is fastened". Thurston, Col. 3, ll. 15-19. Plainly, the area between cutaways 36 is rigid, not flexible, so that the finger projections 70 provide biting action against the base material. Accordingly, Thurston does not teach or suggest "said flange segments being slightly flexible axially of said washer." For at least this reason, Applicant submits that claim 22 is allowable.

Applicant submits that the subject matter of the present application is novel, non-obvious, and useful, and, therefore, respectfully requests prompt consideration and allowance of the application.

Dated: April 26, 2006

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael Pruden  
(Reg. No. 52,135)